

APR 2 2001

Mr. Alejandro Checchi-Lang  
Director of Public Animal & Plant Health  
European Commission  
Directorate General - SANCO  
Rue de La Loi #200  
1049 Brussels, Belgium

Dear Mr. Checchi-Lang:

As you know, we have continued to monitor the developments regarding foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) within the Community. The timely notifications of new outbreaks and control measures as provided by your services have been very much appreciated. We have also received additional details from individual Member States as to their individual actions in response to the current FMD situation. All of this information has been helpful in clarifying the current situation.

We recognize the efforts that both the EU and individual Member States have taken to control and prevent further spread of the disease. Still, we remain highly concerned that the spread of the virus within the Community has not yet been stopped. While both the additional outbreak in France and the apparent spread to the Netherlands can be eventually linked back to animal movements from the UK, we cannot overlook the serious potential of continued undetected spread of the virus. Therefore, the safeguard action which we took on March 13, whereby we temporarily prohibited the importation of susceptible animals and many of their products from the entire EU, will be maintained for the time being.

We understand that the Commission, as well as the Member States, are anxious to have trade restored in as timely a manner as is reasonable. No doubt you also appreciate our need to ensure that appropriate measures are in place to safeguard our animal populations from the threat of this disease. Once the situation with respect to FMD in the Community stabilizes, APHIS will be in a position to consider alternative approaches. It is our intention to work closely with the Commission to evaluate the disease situation within the Community on the basis of regionalization.

I believe the most efficient way for us to move forward on such an evaluation is through continued open communication between our two services. In order to proceed, we will

require information from your services and, where appropriate, from Member State authorities. It is also possible that APHIS would conduct site visits to regions within the Community, and that information and findings from the site visits would be included in the evaluation.

Various Member States - including Denmark, Finland, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, Ireland, France, and Greece - have already provided some information to document the actions they have taken in response to the outbreak. This information will be considered in our ongoing evaluations. However, the information submitted to date by these Member States may not be sufficient to complete our evaluation. Also, in order to consider regionalization of the EU, we will require information from the Community as a whole.

Based on our current assessment of the situation and with the understanding that circumstances may change due to disease dynamics and the effectiveness of controls in place, APHIS considers the following data to be necessary for evaluating the FMD situation and evaluating the potential for modifying current restrictions:

- (1) outbreak history in the Member State or region;
  - (2) complete information on Community legislation in force to control spread of disease among Member States, including information on limitations that were identified in Community legislation in force at the time of the outbreak, changes made to address these limitations, enforcement processes to implement the changes and enforcement of compliance;
  - (3) information on surveillance or control measures implemented by individual Member States in addition to Community legislation;
  - (4) statistics on trade in live animals and high-risk animal products within the Community since January 2001;
  - (5) trace back results for animals moving from affected areas;
  - (6) information on practices which might serve to introduce disease (e.g., garbage feeding of swine), surveillance of those practices and recent or planned legislative changes that might affect these practices;
  - (8) mechanisms in place to assure compliance with Community and Member State legislation, as well as mechanisms to identify and correct failures in the safeguarding system; and
  - (9) vaccination practices and vaccination records for the region as applicable;
- In addition, given the nature of the disease and this outbreak, other factors such as environmental factors (e.g., prevailing wind patterns) that might contribute to disease spread may potentially be included.

I hope this information will help you understand our position and will allow your services to provide the required information as soon as it is available. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me directly, or our office located in Brussels.

Sincerely,

/s/ **Chester A. Gipson**

Alfonso Torres  
Deputy Administrator  
Veterinary Services

cc:

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